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ABSTRACT

This document summarizes presentations made at a national policy forum concerning children's transition from home and preschool to the first years of elementary school. Three presentations by individual speakers examined: (1) the strategic importance of linkages and the transition between early childhood programs and early elementary school; (2) program coordination and other issues in strengthening linkages; and (3) findings and implications of a study on transitions to kindergarten in American schools. Three panel discussions considered the following topics: assessment issues related to transition; policy issues related to developmentally appropriate curricula, parental involvement, and multiculturalism; and administrative issues and barriers to the development of stronger linkages and transition programs. Small group sessions discussed barriers to, strategies for, and policy implications of, the development of transition programs. These sessions also tried to incorporate the information presented in the forum into regional agendas for support of transition programs. Appendices include a list of forum participants and a description of the early childhood program efforts of each of the 10 educational research laboratories. (BC)

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STICKING TOGETHER

Strengthening Linkages and the Transition Between Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary School

Summary of a National Policy Forum

PS 020988

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Strengthening Linkages and the Transition Between Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary School

Summary of a National Policy Forum

Jointly Sponsored by

Administration on Children, Youth and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
and
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The Regional Educational Laboratories

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November 1992

Contents

Presenters v

Introduction 1

Summary of Forum Proceedings 3

Summary of Presentations

The Strategic Importance of Linkages and the Transition Between Early Childhood Programs and Early Elementary School
by Sharon Lynn Kagan 7

Program Coordination and Other Real World Issues in Stengthening Linkages
by Willie J. Epps 11

Findings and Implications from the Study *Transitions to Kindergartens in American Schools* (The Transition Study)
by John Love 13
Discussion by Rebecca Marcon 14

Summary of Panel Presentations

Assessment Issues Related to the Transition 17
by Mary Catherine Ellwein, John Bergan, Samuel Meisels

Policy Issues of Developmentally Appropriate Curricula, Parental Involvement, and Multiculturalism 19
by Barbara Bowman, Lily Wong Fillmore, David Weikart

Administrative Issues and Barriers to Stronger Linkages and Transition 22
by Lois Engstrom and Maurice Sykes

Summary of Small Group Sessions --

Barriers, Strategies, and Policy Implications 27

Regional Agendas 29

Epilogue 31

Appendix A: Participant List 29

Appendix B: Abstracts of Individual Laboratory Early Childhood Education Programs

Collaborative Early Childhood Education Program 57

Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc. (AEL) 59

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (FWL) 61

Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL) 63

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) 64

Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands (NE/I) 66

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) 67

Pacific Region Educational Laboratory (PREL) 70

Mid-Atlantic Laboratory — Research for Better Schools, Inc (RBS) 71

SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) 73

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) 75

Presenters

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LOIS ENGSTROM is the Early Childhood Family Education Supervisor, Minnesota Department of Education, where she directs statewide policy and program development and assists school districts in establishing or expanding their Early Childhood Family Education programs.

WILLIE J. EPPS is currently the Project Director of the Southern Illinois University Head Start Program in East St. Louis. Previously, he was a university administrator, college professor, school teacher, and program officer with the U.S. Department of Education.

LILY WONG FILLMORE is Professor, Language and Literacy Division, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley. She has worked on issues related to the educational adjustment of language minority children since the mid-1950's.

SHARON LYNN KAGAN is the Senior Associate, Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University. She is recognized nationally and internationally for her work related to the care and education of young children and their families.,

JOHN LOVE was the Principal Investigator of the study "Transitions to Kindergartens in American Schools", conducted by the RMC Research Corporation, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, under contract to the U.S. Department of Education.

REBECCA MARCON, who has conducted research on children attending Head Start and pre-kindergarten schools in the District of Columbia, is a current member of the Psychology Department, University of North Florida.

SAMUEL MEISELS is a Professor in the School of Education and a Research Scientist at the Center for Human Growth and Development, University of Michigan. He has published extensively in the fields of early childhood development, assessment, and special education, as well as practicing extensively in the field.

MAURICE SYKES is Director of Early Childhood Programs, District of Columbia Public Schools. He is currently working on improving transition programs for language-minority children.

DAVID WEIKART is the President of High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, Ypsilanti, Michigan. Part of his responsibilities included serving as Director of the widely publicized Perry Preschool Project, started in 1962.

Introduction

Representatives of diverse interests came together in September 1991 to discuss the issue of linkages and transition between early childhood education programs and elementary schools.

The first National Policy Forum was conducted under an interagency agreement between the Head Start program in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in the U.S. Department of Education. OERI's ten regional educational laboratories were integral participants in the forum, as was the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education in the Department of Education.

What is Transition? The focus of the forum was on the transition of children from home and preschool to the first years of elementary school. Children experience a unique set of challenges in making this particular transition. These may include:

- spending more time away from home;
- adjusting to an elementary school environment that is likely to place more emphasis on formal educational experiences, including acquiring reading and mathematics skills and being tested, than in their prior experiences;
- sharing the attention of the teacher with more children than before;
- in some cases, not having prior accomplishments and strengths in preschool recognized and built upon;
- possibly as a result of such lack of recognition, being unnecessarily misplaced or even retained in one or another elementary grade school levels or programs.

Parents - often termed as children's first teachers - can significantly help their children's transition to school. Such help can take many forms, including being active in both preschool and elementary school programs, as well as sensing and facilitating their children's development as they approach school.

John Love, a forum participant, recently completed a study of transitions to kindergarten in American schools.[1] Love focused upon the degree of continuity or discontinuity that children experience as they enter the world of formal schooling (in kindergarten) as an important element in the transition. In general, continuity with prior experiences for such children was seen as desirable.

But not all transitions will be smooth, of course. And it is possible that a child may experience substantial discontinuity, but still benefit if she or he moves from a low quality preschool environment to a different, but higher quality elementary school environment. So to a considerable degree, the policy focus of this forum was how to build upon positive home and preschool experiences, also to prevent any discontinuities in the transition to school from being unnecessarily abrupt or disorienting for children.

Why Is Transition Important? The transition is important in part because of the emphasis in the country upon early childhood development and school readiness. The first of six National Education Goals agreed upon by the President and nation's governors is that "All children will enter school ready to learn by the year 2000."

The nation has a substantial investment in preschool programs. Research shows that by and large early intervention has a strong,

positive long-term impact on the social competence and general functioning of at-risk children. There is evidence, however, that Head Start children often experience difficulty when they enter elementary school. Studies have indicated that the educational advantages Head Start children have over comparable children who have not been in Head Start tend to fade during the early elementary school years. Thus, the need to sustain the benefits of Head Start is a further reason why considering the transition to elementary school is important.

Also, the relationships between preschools and elementary schools have been subject to new pressures in the present environment to reform education. As a result of the movement for higher standards in our schools, there are increasing pressures in many kindergartens to stress academic subjects, test children more, and have an extra year of classes for those though not to be ready for kindergarten or first grade.[2] Preschool educators often disagree with these practices, and much debate exists over whether "developmentally-appropriate" education often practiced in preschool[3] sho uld be continued into elementary school.

The two federal agencies which sponsored this forum have substantial interests in transition issues. The Head Start Program funded by HHS, for example, is the largest preschool program in the country. The Chapter 1 Program, funded by the Education Department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education Program (OESE), is the largest school compensatory education program in the country. Many Head Start children continue their education and development in Chapter I programs.

Many other groups are vitally interested in the development of transition policies and programs for young children. At the national level, these include the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Head Start Association, both of which provided support to the national forum, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Numerous groups are concerned about these issues at state and local levels. These include departments of education and other state agencies, school districts, preschools, community agencies and parents.

1.*Transitions to Kindergarten in American Schools*, prepared under contract to the U.S. Department of Education by the RMC Research Corporation, Portsmouth, NH, 1992.

2.See Love, Ibid, p. 7, for details.

3.Love, ibid. p.6, discusses the differences between developmentally—appropriate practice and the "academic" approach often found in kindergartens today. Love characterizes the former in part as "building on each child's abilities and interests", with the teacher acting as a guide or facilitator of learning. Developmentally-appropriate practice is also thought to mean education and instruction appropriate to children's age and individual differences. Love characterizes the "academic approach" in part as one in which "teachers directly instruct children, predominantly in large groups, and rely on paper—and—pencil activities such as worksheets and flash cards". Such characterizations may oversimplify the matter, including the extent to which elements of the different approaches are actually mixed in individual classrooms, but Love's presentation illuminates the essential nature of the curricular controversy.

Summary of Forum Proceedings

Comments by Representatives of Sponsoring Agencies

There is nothing more important than getting children ready for school - and getting schools ready for children," said DIANE RAVITCH, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) of the U.S. Department of Education. Opening the first National Policy Forum on the transition from early childhood programs to early elementary school, Ravitch noted that all the other National Goals adopted by the nation's governors and President Bush will be more attainable if we succeed with the first one - making sure all children are ready for school.

The first forum took place amidst an "unprecedented" expansion of Head Start, noted WADE HORN, Commissioner of HHS' Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF). "It is important to attend to the important question of how the gains created by Head Start can continue in both short- and long-term ways," he said. Head Start will enhance its services, providing a literacy component in all programs. The other major step that needs to be taken is to provide a better transition for young children from preschool to the early grades. A new grant program by ACYF will pilot partnerships between Head Start and public schools, but Horn admitted that "our knowledge base is limited-we need to know what are our best models."

Similar efforts at understanding the issues and creating alternatives are underway in the U.S. Department of Education, according to JOHN T. MacDONALD, Assistant Secretary of the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Services provided by Chapter I, Even Start, and Head Start should be fully coordinated. Assuring that every child is ready for school is more than an education issue. It is also one of providing comprehensive services to children.

The individual forum sessions centered on different aspects of the transition and strengthening links between early childhood education and early elementary school. Sessions highlighted promising directions and provided guidelines for further regional activities.

SHARON LYNN KAGAN gave the keynote address. Kagan stressed the need for linkages between early childhood education programs and early elementary school. She reviewed current research and policy issues. Kagan explained why structural, philosophical, and theoretical changes must take place in dealing with young children's educational needs.

WILLIE J. EPPS discussed coordination of preschool and school programs from the first-hand, practical perspective of a Head Start director.

JOHN LOVE discussed results of a 1988 study about transitions to kindergarten. Over 1,000 schools were included in the study. REBECCA MARCON highlighted important findings of the study.

MARY CATHERINE ELLWEIN, JOHN BERGAN and SAMUEL MEISELS examined early childhood assessment issues. Conventional educational testing was viewed as inappropriate and alternative assessment measures were suggested.

BARBARA BOWMAN, LILY WONG FILLMORE, and DAVID WEIKART discussed policy issues such as developmentally appropriate curricula, cultural continuity, and creating systematic change.

LOIS ENGSTROM and MAURICE SYKES then discussed administrative issues and barriers to change. Both stressed the need for more communication between preschool and school educators and gave suggestions for working with policy makers and educators to bring about change.

In addition to the presentations by the speakers listed above, the forum agenda included:

- Small group discussions on the barriers to stronger linkages and how to overcome them; and

- Regionally focused meetings on the implications of the National Policy Forum discussions. Agendas for follow-up meetings were agreed upon.

The forum "made it clear that there has been some in-depth work on transitions for the past two or three decades," Jeff Rosenberg, special assistant to the ACYF commissioner, commented at the final general session. The knowledge base is increasing, good data are available, demonstrations on transitions to public schools are underway, and the commitment to stronger linkages is at a high level. But the forum also laid bare the attitudinal and organizational barriers that must be overcome. The task of the first national forum was to frame the issues, Rosenberg concluded. "Next year we will be more specific," and after a year of concerted effort, "we should be impressed with what we have done."

Summary of Presentations

The Strategic Importance of Linkages and the Transition Between Early Childhood Programs and Early Elementary School

Sharon Lynn Kagan

"It is still true, no matter how old you are—when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together." Robert Fulgham[1]

Summary

Transitions are those activities that support the principle of continuity for young children. They occur either vertically — through the time periods of children's lives — or horizontally — across children's families, schools, and communities. Both of these kinds of continuity are important and both have been emphasized to some degree in Head Start and Chapter I programs. However, a comprehensive approach to continuity —- one that ensures the coordinated involvement of schools, preschools, families, and other service agencies —- is receiving more attention than ever, for four reasons.

First, the national goal on readiness is advancing the importance of parent involvement and home/school continuity. Second, those concerned with the "fade out" effects of early investment in young children are being heard. In order to sustain the benefits, "we have to stop treating early childhood education as a one-shot operation". Third, the increasing complexity in social problems means that schools alone do not have the ability to provide the solutions; instead, they must reach across agency boundaries and establish strong linkages with other social services. Finally, there is a new ethos in the early education field, in which child care and early education are no longer seen as separate.

Continuity in children's lives has been studied for a long time, Two of the pioneering efforts at ensuring better transitions were Follow Through and the Head Start Planned Variations. A third initiative, Project Developmental Continuity, addressed a comprehensive range of transition issues, and though effects were modest, the promise of a comprehensive transition approach was established.

The Head Start Transition Project, a 1986 demonstration to develop different approaches to transition from Head Start, found some effective elements at the 15 sites, including:

- written transition agreements between Head Start programs and the schools;
- consistent and devoted attention to children's needs at the time of transition, including the orderly passing on of written records and home visits;
- transition efforts that function throughout the year;
- training for parents in dealing with the public education system;
- visits by kindergarten teachers and children to Head Start programs, and vice versa.

Some problems encountered were different educational approaches of Head Start and schools, the failure to transfer records, inability

[1] *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten: Uncommon Thoughts on Common Things,* Robert Fulgham, Villard Books, 1988.

of some parents to deal successfully with the school system and vice versa, inability of some children to meet the academic demands of school, and "hostile, competitive, or patronizing attitudes of Head Start and school staff toward each other."

What are the messages of these studies? Transition activities need to be coordinated and ongoing. Transition activities need to focus on parents, children, and records. Parents need to be familiar with the teachers and teaching methods of kindergarten. Children's visits to kindergarten and close communication among teachers can greatly facilitate the transition. Finally, records can provide kindergarten teachers with good information on what each child has experienced in the preschool program and on his/her learning styles. However, the records should not be used to label children as disadvantaged, a frequent fear of Head Start personnel.

Research studies have also informed the profession about the challenges inherent in evaluating transitions. They have pointed up the failures of efforts due to a lack of full implementation, and at a deeper level, to a lack of conceptual certainty and agreement regarding the definition of continuity. This uncertainty indicates perhaps the most profound problem with past efforts: They "lacked a guiding framework, as evidenced in the multiple goals and strategies advanced. Few addressed deepseated attitudinal and structural problems, and they were too narrowly conceived and too shallow in implementation."

Those committed to better transitions for young children need a shared vision that transcends the limited scope of past efforts and provides continuity in terms of philosophy, pedagogy, and structure.

In order to develop a common philosophical and theoretical philosophy, sustained training will be needed to eliminate differences among those who work with young children. Half of the professionals have been trained in early childhood education and half in a curriculum approach, "and there needs to be a coming together so that everyone has both". Also, there are sometimes "hostile attitudes on both sides". All of the effort on creating better transitions will not work "if we only deal with surface problems in training and don't get down to attitudes and philosophy."

As for pedagogy, the classrooms of preschool programs and of the early grades "should look different but should not feel so terribly different to young children." Also, it is important to maintain continuity in terms of responsibility to, and respect for, families and their home cultures. Such efforts require built-in time for Head Start and public school teachers to share ideas and knowledge about curricula and children.

The structure of programs to provide continuity for children is the most obvious barrier, but also the one most often neglected. For example, the ratio of teachers to children in Head Start programs is excellent, as opposed to the higher ratios in elementary schools. Other problems include disparities in credentialling requirements, salaries, and licensing regulations.

These considerations illustrate that the policy framework for transitions "is not only about activities at different levels but about deep, systemic changes".

Addressing remarks to school and Head Start policymakers, Kagan recommended they establish planning committees that would define goals; develop actions in such areas as

parent and teacher education regarding transitions, continuity in the curriculum, and what happens at the actual time of transition; develop ongoing training; and provide flexibility in the use of Head Start and Chapter I funding. Such a committee should "reflect a consensus and a vision."

At the community level, links need to be established and maintained among providers of similar services as well as among different service types. Citing her past research, Kagan suggested collaboration as one effective strategy for "altering community commitment to young children." Such collaborations can raise parents' awareness of the issues, reduce hostility and increase understanding and interaction among children's services, and lead to the efficient provision of integrated services. Kagan stressed the importance of getting beyond the Head Start/school link to establish continuity across the entire community.

Key issues to be addressed at the state level include discrepancies in regulations, salaries, and training requirements. The child care/education split should be addressed, and methods of uniting the two fields considered.

At the national level, policymakers should not confuse testing and genuine assessment of school readiness. The two issues--testing and assessment--need to be disaggregated. The National Goals Panel's task force on assessment of school readiness defines readiness broadly and recommends the collection of information from parents, teacher observations, and children themselves (through portfolios and direct measures of skills, knowledge, and abilities). "We need hard data about children, and this is an opportunity" to obtain broad-based knowledge about them.

In summary, Kagan urged forum participants to be "intentional" about their goals, "get beneath band-aid approaches to transition," and focus on philosophical, pedagogical, and structural change.

Program Coordination and other Real-World Issues in Strengthening Linkages

Willie J. Epps

"I was ready to learn, but the school was not ready to receive me."

Summary

Epps, director of the Head Start Program at Southern Illinois University in East St. Louis, came with a prepared research paper, but he made his points by describing a conversation with "Dr. Stallings", a friend who reminisced about moving from Head Start to public school. Epps' anecdotal message dramatized the issues.

In Head Start, Dr. Stallings told Epps, there was a ratio of one adult to each 10 children and "they gave me pats on the back." In kindergarten, he was never touched. He felt he was ready to learn, but tests said he wasn't, so he was put in a transition class, which was a waste of time and "an excuse to separate me." His mother was willingly involved in the Head Start program but felt unwelcome and uncomfortable in the school setting. "I was ready to learn," Dr. Stallings told Epps, but "the school was not ready to receive me." Dr. Stallings was rescued by Miss Thompson, his fifth grade teacher, who became his mentor throughout his education and into his career.

Epps used this illustration to expand upon his knowledge of the barriers faced by those who operate Head Start programs and the children they serve. He saw as needs:

- a holistic approach to children that identifies, understands, and addresses their multiple needs;
- collaborative transition efforts;
- program continuity through a developmentally appropriate curriculum, tailored to the needs and interests of the student;
- support services for families;
- continuity in parental involvement; and
- teachers who are "positive wizards." The Wizard of Oz did not take anything from his petitioners--he gave them all something. "There are too many negative wizards in the schools," Epps said. "They can change a whole belief system in a child with only one negative statement."

In Epps' East St. Louis Head Start Program, parents attend training about what to expect in the public schools. It is not mandatory; however, Epps added that "they will attend." The real mission of Head Start is to break the cycle of poverty, and this is something "children don't do. It is what their parents do."

Epps' Head Start parents learn how to approach the school bureaucracy--who to see about what. They learn terms used by teachers and what they mean. They learn how to be an active participant in parent-child-teacher conferences. They learn their rights and responsibilities, how to assume responsibility for the behavior of their children, and how to build up their own self-esteem.

Other transition features of Epps' program include:

- accreditation of all Head Start centers by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, assuring that the programs are developmentally appropriate.
- exchanges with kindergarten teachers. Kindergarten children also become "alumni"

for the Head Start children, giving them more useful ideas than adults do, such as: "You are not going to have any choice on what color to make a turkey, and stay between the lines." or "Be sure and catch the ball to show you have eye-hand coordination." These may be facetious, but Epps was serious about his point on the importance of preparing children for kindergarten. "We have seen children succeed because we have actually shown them the way to act".

- emphasizing male roles with the Head Start children. Recognizing that four-fifths of their children have single mothers, the East St. Louis centers encourage male role models. Male high school students enrolled in early childhood centers work in the Head Start centers weekly.

Has his program been able to change teacher attitudes toward Head Start? Epps noted that just planning the proposal for linking the two levels was "tremendously helpful" in breaking down the barriers. In their visits to the Head Start centers, kindergarten teachers see the high standards set for the program, e.g., the absence of any commercial materials. Head Start and kindergarten teachers hold joint workshops, as do principals and Head Start administrators. In fact, Head Start and public school people now meet monthly.

Epps also worked with preschool teachers from throughout St. Louis County in order to develop a single, uniform transfer sheet that Head Start programs pass on to the public schools.

Findings and Implications from the study *Transitions to Kindergartens in American Schools* (The Transition Study)

John Love and Rebecca Marcon

"Schools are more likely to have transition activities for parents when they have more positive expectations for students."

In order to understand how the benefits achieved by quality preschool programs for disadvantaged children can be continued in school, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned a study in 1988 on the move from various preschool experiences to kindergarten ("Transitions to Kindergarten in American Schools" - another study looked at promising parent education programs). The 1,200 schools and 850 school districts studied represent a stratified random sample.

Transition does not appear to be a high priority of the nation's schools. Only about one-fifth of the districts reported a "wide range" of transition activities; one-half said there was no communication between pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers on curriculum coordination; only 13 percent of the districts have written transition policies.

Some details on programs:

- More than one-fourth of the public schools with a kindergarten also have some kind of pre-kindergarten, but typically it is a half-day program.

- Having a pre-school program in the same school helps with the sharing of records and communication with parents. However, "there is no guarantee that this will make a difference. What does count is what people decide to do--their leadership, attitudes, and expectations."

- Schools have more coordination and communication with preschools when a staff person is assigned responsibility for transition activities, especially if that person is an administrator.

The study also found that the academic and developmental dimensions in kindergarten are very independent of each other. "Schools like to call themselves developmental...but when you look at the practices, you see an awful lot of academics going on." For example, 21 percent have readiness classes; 61 percent retain children in kindergarten; and 23 percent assign kindergartners to transition classes if they are deemed not ready for first grade.

Programs in high-poverty schools are more likely to have preschool units, a full-day kindergarten, and a greater academic focus, Love reported. Other characteristics of schools with large numbers of low-income families include:

- favorable staff/child ratios in kindergarten;

- school-sponsored parent education with home visits;

- kindergarten parents contributing to school policies on retention and grievance procedures; and

- providing parent involvement opportunities for parents of preschoolers.

However, there also were some less favorable aspects in low-income schools, including retention of more children in kindergarten, assessment of preschoolers at entry and assignment of children to extra-year transition classes.

Large schools--those with more than 500 students--tend to have more activities for parents, to have full -day kindergartens, and to have pre-kindergarten programs--and to retain children in kindergarten and test children entering kindergarten.

The greatest adjustment made was to academic demands in kindergarten, but the focus should be on other priorities, such as greater communication with kindergarten by children and parents beforehand, providing kindergarten teachers with more information, and greater continuity in philosophy. Efforts "are wasted" if pre-kindergarten is built around a developmental program, but the children move into a traditional, rigid public school classroom experience.

Discussion by Rebecca Marcon

The study's findings should be used as checkpoints for assessing local transition efforts. Among the more important conclusions are the need to formalize policies (to avoid a situation where the attitude of the school principal can make or break good policies) and the need for continuity in the curriculum. Too many teachers do not know what developmental means. "Everyone says they are for the developmental approach, but they aren't." "Teachers are likely not to make an effort to change if they believe they already are using a developmental curriculum."

Data from another study found that children with pre-kindergarten experiences did much better on adaptive skills in kindergarten than those without them. Statistics from various studies say more about schools than about children, particularly their use of retention. For example, an explanation for the loss of gains made in Head Start might be found in school structures. Children are accustomed to personal attention in Head Start programs, which have a much lower pupil-teacher ratio than do public kindergartens. By first grade, children move into even larger classes. By this time they also have lost the attention of an aide, and support services for them and their families usually do not continue. These are big adjustments for young children.

Summary of Panel Presentations

Assessment Issues Related to Transition

Panelists: Mary Catherine Ellwein, John Bergan and Samuel Meisels

"All children are ready to learn from the day they are born. We do not want a readiness test or assessment that ranks them or gate-keeps in the early grades."

Experts in early childhood education discussed assessment in broad terms that minimize traditional testing. In fact, the panelists on assessment issues in the transition from preschool to school programs all focused on alternatives to testing per se.

Mary Catherine Ellwein

Assessment should shift from individual children to the assessment of contexts. Studies by L. Vigotsky show that any type of higher cognitive functioning occurs first on a social plane--in interactions with others. Only by looking at a child's development through collaboration with concerned adults can you get a process assessment.

A dynamic assessment of young children, based upon how they perform with adults and in various activities, is proposed. In fact, it is carried out as an ongoing activity involving a child and a teacher, with the teacher's role "not as a tester but as an active researcher on a child's development." The indicators to look at can be general, such as how a child chooses toys over time, or it can be specific, such as how a child uses manipulatives. Moreover, the assessment should be geared to social and emotional factors and language development, as well as cognitive development.

A good dynamic assessment will deepen the evidence on a child, pass on more elaborate information to the next teacher, and provide better communication to parents. In the aggregate, such assessments can be used by a community. Not all teachers can perform dynamic assessments well, or do one at all, but the need for such assessments should be addressed.

John Bergan

Path-referenced assessment is proposed. Testing has played a major role in causing widespread failure among children, when what is needed are assessment instruments that help children learn. The limitations of norm-referenced tests and criterion-referenced tests with young children can be contrasted to alternative, path-referenced assessment designed to encourage developmentally appropriate environments as well as assess individual children. The path-referenced assessment defines a child's level of ability in terms of his or her position on a path made up of "an empirically validated sequence of capabilities reflecting development." The path-referenced instruments assess children's abilities, not just their performance on specific test items. By linking ability to path position, this approach provides information on what children have accomplished, what they are ready to learn now, and what they will be ready to learn in the future.

The instruments assess a child's readiness in language, math, nature and science, perception, reading, social development, and fine and gross motor development. However, the process includes other elements, as well. For example, teachers and/or parents receive information for planning appropriate learning environments for a child. It is important to include parents in

the assessment process: "If you can tell parents where a child is, they can support the child at home."

The path-referenced assessment becomes part of the records used in transition; it helps with program management, and it provides program evaluations. For example, a Head Start program evaluation shows the skills being taught.

My research indicates that when teachers use the path-referenced assessment data, children benefit cognitively, not just on specific skills, but developmentally. Only five percent of children assessed with my instruments were placed in special education, compared to 27 percent in control classes. One-half of all referrals to special education occur by the second grade, "so whatever we can do to improve assessments is important for these children."

The assessments account for stages of understanding. For example, in science and nature, a child may first understand that fish live in the ocean, come to understand that the environment affects animal life, then show an understanding that animal life affects the environment. "We have to understand different ways in which a child uses knowledge and the procedures which make that use easy or difficult."

Samuel Meisels

Testing is beginning to have more high-stakes consequences, which makes it even more imperative to find alternatives to traditional tests used in early childhood education. The University of Michigan Assessment Alternatives Project has developed a system that includes a criterion-referenced checklist, a portfolio collection, and summative teacher reports.

The criterion-referenced checklist, used three times during the school year by the teacher, charts the progress of a child across several categories, including gross and fine motor skills, expressive and receptive language, reasoning and cognition, and socio-emotional development. Its purpose is to document children's participation in developmentally appropriate curricula.

The portfolio items are gathered across an entire year, with structured samples of a child's work that can display the developmental sweep" of his/her performance. The summative teacher report form is a profile on each child at the end of the school year, based on teacher observations, performance on the checklist, and an evaluation of the student's portfolio. The project components are being piloted in a number of school districts and Head Start programs.

"Tests do not have magical powers...We are the ones who assign them power." The task force on assessment of school readiness for the National Goals Panel avoided recommending a "readiness test" in its report. A basic question the group faced was "Where does readiness reside, in the child or in the school?" My position is that readiness is an interaction among child, school, family, and societal variables--all of which have an important role to play in the transition that young children make to public schools.

Policy Issues of Developmentally Appropriate Curricula, Parental Involvement and Multiculturalism

Panelists: Barbara Bowman, Lily Wong Fillmore and David Weikart

"There is general agreement among the leadership about developmental continuity, but the field has not accepted this issue."

Summary
The needs of young children apparently are outpacing the frameworks created to care for them. Changes in the family, in the community, and in the demographics of young children call for dramatically different environments in early childhood education. However, those who understand these issues worry about the slow pace of change, in spite of the demonstrated benefits of continuity for children who are buffeted by instability.

Barbara Bowman

One of the most important influences on learning is the setting where it takes place. When the setting is familiar, children can use past experience to help them "make sense" of the task before them. But unfamiliar settings can be a major barrier to learning, particularly for young children. When their worlds are changing too much, it is more difficult for them to grasp new concepts and see how what they already know fits new situations. Young children learn best when there is a great deal of consistency in their lives.

When children change caregivers or attend schools with quite different rules and expectations or must interact with people from very different cultures, they often feel unsure of themselves and are unable to understand what is being asked of them. The newer and more different a context is, the more difficult it is for them to adapt. Children eventually learn to detach learning from contexts, and use skills and knowledge learned in one context in others, but that takes time. Other factors which determine children's understanding of learning tasks include:

- Cultural factors. Minority children attending mainstream schools, for example, often find a "contextual discontinuity." Research has shown that African-American children follow a different pattern in answering questions from that of white children, relating objects or experiences to themselves. A white child might call a banana by name; an African-American child might describe it as "what my grandmother gave me."

- Emotional stress. Strong feelings may interfere with children's ability to transfer what they know to a new context. Strong emotions, such as anxiety, fear, and frustration, get in the way of children's ability to make use of what they already know.

Teachers can ease transitions for children by relying more on their parents. A parent who sits down and plays briefly with a child in the classroom helps in two ways: she relieves anxiety the child may feel in the new setting, and she clues the child in to what is expected of him or her. Teachers also can help by finding out about children's past experiences and building some similarities in the new school environment. For instance, a child accustomed to a quiet, well-ordered

environment may need protection from "the chaos" of school life. Other children, accustomed to greater freedom, may need opportunities to learn on the move.

Teachers who know and understand how parents and communities organize their lives--their social interactions, their values, their patterns of work and play--are better able to build bridges between those patterns and the new things the teacher wants the children to learn. Teachers also need to provide time for children to become accustomed to new settings and to explain the differences between "last year" and kindergarten.

In general, transition activities should help children select the knowledge the teacher wants from their repertoire, provide enough that is familiar so that the child can identify a new learning task, and provide learning supports in the form of human relationships and physical settings that help children feel confident and competent.

Lily Wong Fillmore

Continuity means keeping children tied to their family language. There needs to be consistency in the language experience of children. Various studies have shown that putting young, limited-English-proficient children in English-only programs has very negative consequences on children and their parents and greatly exacerbates all other problems.

When programs honor family language and are developmentally appropriate for multicultural children, the positive results are obvious. Classrooms with multiple languages to deal with are not as much a problem in early childhood education as in later years, "because children are spoken to individually more than in groups." In most instances, children in a classroom can be grouped into only a few major language groups. "The problem is really for us to figure out solutions to educating children in ways consistent with their family...I am concerned about Moms and Dads having a continuing relationship with their children...about keeping the pieces together around a child."

I found such a model--in California's Foundation Centers. Serving more than 2,000 children at 21 sites, the centers enroll very poor, primarily Latino children. The philosophy of the centers is "culturally appropriate", but the "cultures are neither good nor bad, they just are. We need to know their characteristics and that some hold children back and some facilitate their involvement in school. We need to know which so that we can help families change characteristics or strengthen them."

The Foundation Centers enroll children from infancy up to six years old and are open 11 hours a day. Their environments "are beautiful." They make children feel like privileged people, with flowers, music, and surroundings consistent with the language of the family. Teachers come right from the community, Fillmore explained, and parent education programs are special. Every parent is required to spend at least five minutes when they come to pick up their child, and the staff slips in information on nutrition or an example of story-telling.

As a preliminary to health education, the whole family goes through the health clinic except the child in the program, a week before the child is scheduled. This way parents can explain to the child what will happen--"they do the health education."

After two years in the Center program, children "are up for leaving," but too often "they got the 'poor kid' treatment in school." To change the dynamics, the centers invite school people, as well as local community leaders, to a graduation ceremony. Parents and teachers stand before the public school educators, light

a candle, and turn the child over to them. "The message is that 'you do right by this child.'"

David Weikart

The issue of research on transitions is more one of persuading the field to accept results -- and creating systemic change -- than of convincing the leadership. But a primary audience for messages about the developmental needs of children is those persons exerting the greatest influence on children, such as the commercial media.

Early childhood education needs benchmark programs that can be used and maintained as the base for a system. These should be based on a valid core of beliefs, rather than "a wide range of conflicting ideas," as often occurs now. Such models also should be well documented, be supported by a system that can make them widely applicable, be research-based, be monitored to make sure they are continuing to be effective, contain an assessment system, and actively engage parents.

Trainers for early childhood programs, both preschool and school, need to work from the inside. For example, master trainers need to be on site and providing training specific to the program.

I also recommend that early childhood programs open up to technologies, including computers, "but we are kidding ourselves if we think the field is ready for us. We are only a small choir." As for assessment, I do not see a need to assess all children. Tests are very inaccurate on individuals: "We need to test programs, not children."

Weikart's strongest remarks were about the forces shaping the experiences of young children. "We delude ourselves when we think our issues are central," he said. "The larger culture is more important. A child cannot come to school as a six-year-old having watched 6,000 murders on TV and be calm." Families and teachers do not have much of a chance in competition with movie directors and advertisers.

Instead of having a follow-up forum with the same players, bring in different communities, such as corporate leaders, in order to exercise leadership on behalf of developmentally appropriate programs for young children.

Administrative Issues and Barriers to Stronger Linkages and Transition

Panelists: Lois Engstrom and Maurice Sykes

"We have to be willing to examine what we are doing and change where it is needed. We can't expect children to change."

Lois Engstrom

Creating stronger linkages between early childhood education and early elementary school may mean one thing to policymakers, another to those at state and local levels charged with carrying out the policies. However, effective state and local leadership sees issues, not barriers.

Like other states addressing the need for better transitions for young children, Minnesota discovered that a multiplicity of providers of early childhood education has emerged in recent years. "It would have been easier to tackle transition issues earlier, before the field became so diverse in programs and in philosophies."

From the state perspective, there also are different systems for accountability and for monitoring of funds and difficult communication problems. The privacy of data needs to be worked out among various parties. Programs compete against each other for state funds. But to accept these as impossible barriers is to say to young children that "this is too difficult for us to handle-you will just have to do it on your own." These same issues were identified in a 1981 study by the Head Start Bureau. "How many more conferences and papers do we need?"

Some of the factors contributing to discontinuity include changes in physical surroundings or differences in educational goals and teacher expectations, a marked change in the role of parents, and different behaviors expected of a child. Continuity can be provided or disrupted by four influences -- peer groups, teaching staff, parents and the curriculum/objectives. Fortunately, all of these can be modified.

Teaching staffs need "to really start talking and listening to each other." This should be horizontally, across all early childhood providers, as well as vertically among different levels of programs. Head Start and the public schools are the "big players", but they are not the only ones. "We need common goals across the field as a way of communicating with each other."

In Minnesota, this came about through 22 "vision sharing" workshops. Invitations went out to 13,000 early child-care providers; 1,000 participated in discussions on what they wanted for young children, what could be done better, where are the gaps, and what is a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

The outcomes of the workshops were beyond expectations, creating "the most united front we have ever had for the legislature," and new relationships developed between Head Start and public school staff. The "people relationships" that developed were the key to making progress on better transitions for children. The workshops also produced a consensus on common goals for early childhood education:

- Families will have real choices for their children.

- Children will be served in heterogeneous settings, as close to their homes as possible.

- The system will be child/family centered and resources will follow the children.

- Parents will be considered full partners in their child's development.

- All early childhood service providers will be trained in child development and trained to work cooperatively with parents.

- Close coordination among health, education and human service providers will address the needs of children comprehensively through grade three.

- Resources for children/families will be used effectively and efficiently.

Communities need organizing groups for early childhood services, and they will be aided by the current window of opportunity for improving the transitions of young children. "We are in a state of change, so we might as well get what we can." Involve all stakeholders, be willing to give up what is not working, and watch out for little stumbling blocks, such as negative attitudes toward schools or toward Head Start programs. "We do not have to wait for all of the ducks to be in order. It is time for us to get on with it."

Maurice Sykes

Even in a single school district, there can be a lot of misinformation about what is meant by developmentally appropriate and a lack of knowledge by practitioners. This is what I found in the District of Columbia schools when I became Director of Early Childhood Services. Organizing my advocacy around a simple theme--"Do the Right Thing for Children"-- I created the same kind of ongoing communication within the 81,000 student school system as had been accomplished in Minnesota. Starting more than two years ago, I began a dialogue with everyone within the district who had anything to do with early childhood education, in order to build a consensus about what is developmentally appropriate. "We had to straighten out our own house first", but the effort soon moved into an interagency collaborative. The turf issue was delicate--the move by the school system several years earlier to start programs for four-year-olds had been resented by other program providers, "so we had to work through our problems."

After obtaining a consensus on philosophy and establishing a collaborative, the effort needed a concrete project. Selecting two housing projects, we set out "to see if we can provide all of the services for all of the kids and parents." A third initiative was an early childhood teacher collaborative. As a result of that move, the language among teachers began to change. "They were no longer only kindergarten teachers, but became early childhood practitioners." This network has spawned 17 focus groups, each one organized around a particular interest, such as math or science. It also led to another initiative, a city-wide Early Childhood Institute, planned by teachers. At the institutes, the whole community comes together to get a sense of cohesiveness. It is an activity that says the school district sees early childhood education as an important concern.

I see this work with teachers as necessary "to validate those already doing good practices. I am there to protect them, to help explain what they are doing." For the borderline teachers, the initiatives give them an incentive to push over into good practices. And for the "not-so-good teachers, they see how much is going on and see their own problems."
Another outgrowth of the program is an early childhood principals' seminar every month. The teachers had said that principals needed to be involved. By having their own network

meetings, principals are able to discuss relevant issues away from their school setting." Everyone should have opportunities to be learners in this process.

Finally, parents need to be connected to the effort. "If they feel connected to the school and to advocacy for their children, we will have greater success," Sykes said. "If they become advocates, they will push their children."

But "all of this is messy. As long as you are dealing with people, it will be messy. You need to keep a sense of humor."

Summary of Small Group Sessions

Barriers, Strategies, and Policy Implications

"We can change rules and regulations by changing what's written on paper, but you can't do that with attitudes."

Forum participants met in small groups twice to consider the issues presented at the meeting. In the first session, at the end of day one, they considered barriers to effective transition, strategies to overcome them, and policy implications by responding to three questions posed at the Forum:

1. What are the three most significant barriers to effective preschool-to-school linkages?

The groups had remarkably congruent views about the barriers. They worded their answers differently, but basically listed the barriers as:

- differences in philosophical views, attitudes and training of early childhood and elementary school education
- a tradition of separateness reinforced by different program, policy and funding streams; and
- lack of communication, particularly regarding the importance of family involvement.

2. What strategies may be effective in overcoming these barriers?

- Philosophical Differences (barrier)

  -- Educate communities on child-related issues.

  -- Create a national awareness campaign focusing on the needs of children from birth to age eight.

  -- Conduct massive and ongoing training for teachers, administrators, and policymakers.

  — Develop a common mission.

  — Establish research-based models and provide technical assistance to adopt models.

- Separateness (barrier)

  — Build a community team approach.

  — Reconfigure funding to encourage flexibility and change.

  — Set certification and program standards.

  — Involve practitioners in policymaking.

  — Implement activities to build partnerships for better resource use.

  — Establish joint planning, funding, and implementation.

  — Should create interagency support and agreements.

- Communication (barrier)

  — Train parents to be advocates, and train staff to work with parents.

  — Focus on team building.

  — Clarify goals and outcomes for transitions.

  — Develop a common mission

statement with a focus on children and families.

— Provide continuity of services for children, from birth to eight years, and their families.

— Identify priorities and resources; educate the public about them.

3. What are three potential policy implications with respect to strengthening linkages between early childhood and early elementary school programs:

- The need to realign structures at local, state, and federal levels in order to ensure collaboration, put children from birth through age eight and their families at the center of program concerns, and restructure funding for versatility.

- The need to establish comprehensive plans, through interagency agreements and initiatives that require and/or reward collaboration.

- The need to target additional resources at research and dissemination, professional training, and the development of assessment models.

Regional Agendas

The final task of the participants was to apply the Forum's messages and directions for policy to regional efforts. At the end of the second day of the forum, each regional educational laboratory sponsored a meeting to set follow-up plans for its region and the monitoring of them.

Meeting in regionally-organized groups, participants first narrowed the forum's content to three themes that would be most significant for further efforts in their regions.

The themes were fairly consistent across the regions. It was obvious the participants believed linkages and transitions should be developed into a cohesive passage for a much larger cohort of young children than current efforts address. Cross-agency, community-wide planning and programs should reach children from birth to age eight. Consequently, stakeholders who need to be reached and brought into collaboration with each other will come from broader constituencies. The media and the business community were specifically mentioned as examples of such broader constituencies to be involved in linkage and transition issues. Other comments from group discussions follow.

Leaders need to understand that in order for this (transition and linkages) to work, we must stop talking just to each other and involve families and communities more", noted the North Central Laboratory group.

The importance of finding ways to intensify outreach to, and involvement of, families also was a consistent concern of the regional groups. Coupled with this was an interest in developing and/or disseminating successful models which foster the involvement of families with different language and cultural backgrounds early and continue it through the primary grades.

Institutions and agencies must direct and coordinate resources to meet the escalating level and increasing complexity of child and family needs, including health problems, poverty, multicultural diversity, and language diversity" suggested the Research for Better Schools group (the Mid-Atlantic Laboratory).

Another theme mentioned frequently was the regional laboratories' role in broadening the knowledge base among policymakers and practitioners alike. They need good information and networking, the regional groups indicated, in order to develop a consensus about the needs, best practices, and resource allocation for programs that will provide continuous educational quality for young children.

The regional groups also discussed what steps could be taken to address the themes they considered the most important to their areas. The group hosted by the Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands thought there is a need to work collectively and individually persuading policymakers to provide incentives for collaboration. These could include rewards, funding simplification, goal alignments, or mandates. In order to reach those who would make such decisions, this group recommended including them in regional meetings, targeting information efforts at policymakers, and promoting awareness of the need for collaboration and creating a shared vision. The Research for Better Schools group discussed

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achieving these goals by developing an interstate compact that would act as a guide and inspiration for local efforts.

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory's group suggested that collaboration could come about by policymakers' decisions to dedicate part of every agency's funding to collaboration or by mandating collaboration.

The Far West Laboratory's group proposed that a regional team be formed to create a network in each state which would work on developing a statewide strategy. Such a strategy should have a grassroots base, according to the group's discussion, with educational awareness campaigns in communities to create public understanding of the importance of continuity and transition efforts for young children. Parents should be included in regional planning efforts.

All agencies involved in transition efforts should agree on both short- and long-term goals, according to the North Central Laboratory's group.

In addition to organizing for collaboration, many of the regional groups indicated their goal would be to find and disseminate information about successful models of linkages and transitions. The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands' group, for example, saw a purpose for a system that could identify model practices and programs in the region, "recognizing that the focus was on transitions, but keeping them in the context of the bigger picture of ages zero to eight." The group hosted by the Southeastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) added that successful programs chosen for dissemination should have a research base.

Because of this emphasis upon creating a clearinghouse of successful models for their regions, the regional groups' information needs centered on profiles of model programs, on research regarding family involvement, multicultural programs, and on collaborative efforts. They also wanted information on how to merge funding streams to foster collaboration. "We felt a need for more information from people who have struggled with putting together a collaboration, as well as a model for collaboration itself," said a representative in the Appalachia Educational Laboratory's group.

Other information needs were: research on the long-term effects of collaborative programs, and state profiles of early childhood services.

EPILOGUE

September 1992

A working version of the forum summary was distributed to participants earlier this year. This published version will be distributed as a resource to participants at the second national forum, to be held in Washington, D.C. in November 1992, and otherwise distributed to interested constituencies by OERI.

The issues discussed in these proceedings have undiminished vitality and importance. The regional educational laboratories are conducting a second round of meetings in their regions during the summer and fall of 1992, and this entire program of work on the transition supported by HHS is to continue through November 1993. Proceedings from the second national forum will be published early in 1993. For further general information about these activities, contact the following person at OERI:

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For information about activities at individual regional educational laboratories, contact the early childhood specialist at the laboratory, as listed in Appendix B.

Appendix A

APPENDIX A

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September 12-13, 1991

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Appendix B

Collaborative Early Childhood Education Program

The Regional Educational Laboratories

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The Administration on Children, Youth and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Transition Task Force of the
U.S. Departments of Education
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The 10 regional educational laboratories are participating in a collaborative early childhood education program with the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) and the Transition Task Force of the U.S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS).

Funded by HHS under an interagency agreement with OERI, the program is operating during the period December 1, 1990 to November 30, 1993. The program's goal is to find ways to strengthen linkages and improve the transition of children from preschool programs to early elementary school. All 10 laboratories participated in the first annual national forum on linkages and transition and held meetings in their regions on the same subject the first year (Program Year 1 - 1990-91). They will participate in national forums and are conducting regional meetings in Program Year 2 (1991-92) and Program Year 3 (1992-93). In addition, five of the laboratories are providing technical assistance and technology transfer services within their regions to help develop, evaluate, and disseminate information about effective transition programs.

Information about individual laboratory regional activities follows. For further information, contact the early childhood specialist whose name is listed on the description. For information about the collaborative early childhood program in general, contact Charles Stalford, Laboratory Team Leader at OERI (202-219-2126) or Allen Smith, Project Officer at ACYF (202-245-0566).

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Description of Early Childhood Program

AEL staff assisted ED's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and HHS' Administration on Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF) in planning and evaluating the annual symposium. Carol Perroncel, with representatives from AEL's Region, attended the National Policy Forum on Strengthening Linkages and Transitions Between Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary School held on September 12-13, 1991, in Washington, DC.

AEL's regional conference on Preschool-to-School Linkages was held November 21-22, 1991 in Louisville, Kentucky. At the request of OERI and ACYF, AEL conducted the conference as a collaborative venture with Kentucky's Head Start Collaboration Project. There were approximately 190 participants representing the following groups: Chapter 1, Department of Education, Early Intervention, Follow Through, Governor's Office, Head Start, Health and Human Resources, parents, state colleges and universities, early childhood technical assistance providers, and early childhood professional associations.

The regional conference was designed as a "working conference" to encourage team building and action plans. Most conferees attended as teams with the intent to work on transition plans for young children, their families, and schools.

Many agencies that provide assistance in early childhood education programming in the region sent a representative to the conference. They provided support to teams preparing transition plans for their respective locales and/or activated a group process to begin collaboration to address transition issues. Some of the agency representatives led break-out groups based on their expertise. These included topics such as Chapter 1 and Early Intervention Programs, Follow Through, Head Start Resource Centers, Collaboration Models, and STEPS (Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public Schools). They also provided displays of materials their organizations have available to support early childhood educators and advocates.

A resource notebook on Preschool-to-School Linkages, developed for the conference, is available from AEL. It includes a potpourri of information on topics such as national goal #1, policy perspectives issued by OERI and AEL related to early childhood education, transition programs that work, parental involvement, ways to establish linkage and transition programs, the ERIC system, and technical assistance providers in the Region. The 1992 regional conference is planned for the end of October and will be in Charleston, West Virginia.

The Rural Excel program at AEL (a non-HHS-funded effort) is involved in an early childhood activity entitled Family Connections. Rural Excel staff are in the process of developing and field testing a series of family guides. The guides (or newsletters) are designed to encourage families to interact with their young children in developmentally appropriate ways and to communicate with their children's teachers. They are targeted to be used by schools with programs for four year olds. The guides will be sent home on a weekly basis by the child's teacher.

Laboratory: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development (FWL)

Address: Center for Child and Family Studies (Marin Office)
180 Harbor Drive, Suite 112
Sausalito, California 94965
415-331-5277 Fax: 415-331-0301
Executive Director: Dean Nafziger
Early Childhood Staff: J. Ronald Lally, Director of the Center for Child and Family Studies
Peter L. Mangione, Senior Research Associate
FranCione Allen, Senior Research Associate
Carol Lou Young-Holt, Training Consultant
Sheila Signer, Program Associate
Contact Person for Early Childhood/Elementary School
Program Linkages Project: Peter L. Mangione
States Served: Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah

Description of Early Childhood Program

Far West Laboratory (FWL) has a distinguished history of work in the field of child and family studies. Most recently, in collaboration with the California State Department of Education it has created the Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers, a comprehensive training system for infant and toddler caregivers. This system features the use of video and print training materials. FWL is currently providing training to trainers and caregivers throughout the country. Another project of FWL is "Families First", a comprehensive/coordinated program for early intervention with young children and families. This work builds on the Syracuse Family Development Research Program, which culminated in a longitudinal assessment of the impact of early intervention from birth to age five. Information about early intervention models, strategies, and outcomes is summarized in various documents that are available from FWL.

In the past year, FWL has been giving increasing attention to improving linkages between early childhood and early elementary programs. The first of three regional symposia on this topic was conducted by FWL in San Francisco on October, 17-18, 1991. The purpose of the regional symposia is twofold. First, the regional conferences aim to disseminate information and ideas presented at national forums on strengthening preschool to school linkages and transition to school. And secondly, the regional symposia are intended to stimulate efforts in the region to provide continuity to children and families as they move from early childhood to early elementary school programs. Featured at the 1991 regional symposium were presentations by John Love, Thomas Payzant, Willie Epps, Samuel Meisels, and Donna Foglia. A wide range of topics received attention including research on transition, developmentally appropriate practice, cultural diversity of students, parent involvement, and assessment. Proceedings from the regional symposium were to be available from FWL in spring, 1992. The 1992 regional symposium is scheduled to take place in Phoenix, Arizona in October, 1992.

In addition to the regional symposia, FWL has initiated a field-based activity to support the development of linkages between early childhood and early elementary school programs in two local communities. In each community, three groups are being formed to

explore strategies for providing greater continuity to children as they make the transition from preschool to school. The groups are 1) a Leadership Team, which is composed of administrators from both the early childhood and elementary school programs, 2) a Teacher Group, which is made up of teachers from both programs, and 3) a Parent Group, which includes parents from both programs. FWL is facilitating the work of the three groups and documenting their progress. This field-based activity commenced in Marin City/Sausalito, California during the 1991-92 school year and is scheduled to begin in the Western Addition neighborhood of San Francisco during the 1992-93 school year. A report of this project will be available in Fall, 1993. This report will summarize the activity, describe its outcomes, and provide guidance on how other communities can initiate a similar preschool to school linkage effort.

Laboratory: Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McREL)

Address: 2550 S. Parker Road, Suite 500
Aurora, CO 80014
(303) 337-0990; FAX - (303) 337-3005
Executive Director: C.L. Hutchins
Early Childhood Specialist: Shirley McCune
States Served: Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming

Description of Early Childhood Program

The McREL Early Childhood Education program is a new program area for the Laboratory. The primary goals for the first year of the program were to:

- develop a data base of the early childhood and family programs which are operating in the McREL states;
- develop a data base of child and family social indicators of income, welfare, poverty, health care, infant mortality and other factors which could provide a state profile of family and child wellness and problems;
- design and implement a regional conference of state and local policy and decision makers to review state data and develop action plans; and
- provide information and assistance to state and local groups seeking to establish/expand early childhood or family programs.

These objectives were accomplished. The McREL Regional Conference was held October 10-11 at the Ramada Inn in Omaha, Nebraska.

The theme of the conference was "Supporting The Family: Comprehensive Programs for Young Children." A total of 72 persons attended the conference which provided lively general sessions, small group sessions and state planning sessions. A primary outcome of the conference was to raise the awareness levels of policy makers in five of the seven states which have relatively few family and early child activities.

Plans for next year will include individual state consultations where larger numbers of policy makers can be reached. It is anticipated that state and regional activities will continue to focus on awareness of needs in the effort to develop a climate where new programs will be funded and existing programs expanded.

Leaders who attended the National Forum have already been helpful in the awareness efforts.

As a result of this effort, the McREL Institute is developing a language program for preschoolers which may be used by parents and teachers.

Laboratory: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

Address: 1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521
708-571-4700 FAX: 708-571-4716
Executive Director: Jeri Nowakowski
Early Childhood Specialist: Linda G. Kunesh
States Served: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

Description of Early Childhood Education Program

Laboratory Participation in the National Forum NCREL Early Childhood and Family Education (EC&FE) staff served as members of the Laboratories Steering Committee to assist in the planning of the National Policy Symposium. EC&FE staff also provided recommendations regarding speakers, format, and invitees to the Symposium.

Regional Forum NCREL's EC&FE staff modeled interagency collaboration in the planning, conduct, and evaluation of the Regional Early Childhood Forum - The NCREL Early Childhood Connection, held October 14 & 15, 1991 in Oak Brook, IL. The Forum had 14 co-sponsoring agencies in addition to NCREL and was attended by 150 people from around the region. The purpose of the Forum was to identify, develop, and promote linkages in the community that foster healthy development of young children, birth through age 8, and their families. Highlights included a keynote presentation on interagency collaboration by

Michael Kirst, a panel discussion on the problems and solutions to collaboration, an address by the Lt. Governor of Illinois, and collaborative work groups in which participants were grouped by affiliation, then across affiliations and states, and finally by states to address issues pertinent to collaboration. A proceedings document, Interagency Collaboration in the Heartland: Challenges and Opportunities is available.

Building on the outcomes of the first regional forum, NCREL's second regional forum will be held in the fall of 1992 and will focus on community-based programs and strategies that improve linkages in early childhood, including promising practices in transition and interagency collaboration. People from the following affiliations will be invited to attend: policymakers; early childhood practitioners; parents; local school districts; higher education; state departments of education; health and human service agencies; state, county, and local service agencies; child advocacy agencies; the judicial system; health care providers; and private business.

Field Activities: A "Notice of Solicitation" has been distributed throughout the region to identify promising practices in transition. From the responses received from the notices, NCREL will select one rural site and one urban site to participate in this phase of work. Both sites will receive technical assistance, technology transfer, and evaluation support from NCREL. Information learned from these activities will be summarized and packaged for dissemination throughout the region to assist others in improving the transition from preschool to kindergarten. In addition, NCREL, in collaboration with the other labs who also have HHS funding for field work will produce a document that includes brief summaries of programs throughout the country that have promising practices or approaches to transition.

Related activities: NCREL supports a regional

Related activities: NCREL supports a regional Early Childhood Advisory Council and the North Central Network of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. NCREL's EC&FE Program functions as an information clearinghouse for early childhood and family education, responding to requests for information and technical assistance via print and electronic networking. It also serves as a broker of training and materials pertaining to EC&FE. NCREL also conducts case studies of promising intra-and interagency collaboration that incorporate integrated, comprehensive, family-focused, and community-based services to young children and their families.

On October 10, 1991, the NCREL and the Public Broadcasting System's Elementary/Secondary Service began a series of eight one-hour video conferences featuring expert teachers and researchers from across the country. Schools that Work: The Research Advantage is primarily designed for teachers, administrators, and curriculum specialists. Two programs of particular interest to the early childhood community are entitled "Meeting Children's Needs" and "Integrating Community Services."

Content partners for Meeting Children's Needs are the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE). The program aired on February 13 and featured Sue Bredekamp, NAEYC; Barbara Bowman, Erikson Institute; Tynette Hills, NAECS/SDE; Willie Epps, East St. Louis Headstart; Maurice Sykes, Washington, DC public schools; Linda Espinosa and Darcy Anderson, Redwood City, CA public schools; and David Burchfield, teacher from Crozet, VA as special guests. The content partner for Integrating Community Services is the National Study Group on School-Linked Services sponsored by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. Videotapes and accompanying guidebooks for each program are available from NCREL.

Laboratory: The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands (NE/I)

Address: 300 Brickstone Square, Suite 900
Andover, MA 01810
508-470-0098 FAX: 508-475-9220
Executive Dir: David P. Crandall
Early Childhood Specialist: Wyllys Terry III
States Served: Connecticut, New Hampshire, New York, Maine, Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virgin Islands

Description of Early Childhood Program

The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands (NE/I) participated with OERI and HHS, as well as the other regional laboratories, in the planning, participant identification, and operation of the national forum held in Chevy Chase, Maryland, in September, 1991. The Northeast Laboratory will continue to participate in future national forums.

A regional forum was held on October 18, 1991 at Andover, Massachusetts for the Northeast and Islands region. The focus of the meeting was on strengthening linkages and transitions between early childhood programs and early elementary school. There were representatives from each of the states in the Northeast. The participants included practitioners in both early childhood programs and elementary schools, colleges, state departments, and consultants. Proceedings of the meeting are available by contacting Sheila Roman Velazquez, extension 492.

There will be regional meetings in the fall of 1992 and 1993.

The Northeast Laboratory is working to identify exemplary transitional programs from early childhood to elementary school in the region. An initial list of programs and their characteristics should be available during the summer of 1992. Nationally recognized programs such as High Scope and the Far West Laboratory's Infant Toddler Program are being made available to practitioners in the region.

The Northeast Laboratory is also working collaboratively with regional technical assistance providers. The focus of this group is on the decision and policy makers who can alter the blueprints in education that have impact on the early childhood system.

Laboratory: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL)

Address: 101 S.W. Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, Oregon 97204-3212
503-275-9500 Fax: 503-275-9489
Executive Director: Robert R. Rath
Early Childhood Specialist: Nancy Faires Conklin
States Served: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington

Description of Early Childhood Program

HHS FUNDING: NWREL Participation in National Forum

NWREL staff participated in planning for, and attending, the National Policy Forum "Strengthening Linkages and the Transition Between Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary School" held in Chevy Chase, Maryland, on September 12-13. NWREL's specific activities included: (1) work on the Symposium Steering Committee; (2) coordination and production of guidelines for Symposium small groups; (3) summarization and reporting of small group sessions at the Symposium; and (4) reporting on the regional meeting. NWREL sponsored six individuals from the Northwest to attend the national forum.

HHS FUNDING: Linkages between early childhood education and early elementary education

This project convenes the region's public and private sector educators and policy leaders to address ways to enhance the transition to schools from the diverse system of early childhood programs. A regional, invitational conference "The Challenge of Transition," was held November 4-5, 1991, in Portland, Oregon. Northwest leaders in health, human services, education, government, business, and industry came together to bridge early childhood programs and the elementary schools. Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan served as the keynote speaker.

Because change and improvement are more likely to occur when all major players are involved, the conference targeted "community teams." In a day-long working session, these teams developed long-range plans for improving the transition of young children into the elementary grades. A conference report is available from NWREL. Planning is currently under way for the second annual conference to be held during the fall of 1992.

OERI FUNDING: School-Based Early Childhood Centers

There is considerable interest in the Northwest in establishing and operating early childhood centers in public schools. To assist this, NWREL has begun an activity to identify, develop, and evaluate model programs that integrate early childhood and early elementary education, emphasizing developmentally appropriate and child/family-centered approaches.

Thirty sites were identified in the region which: (1) adhere to quality child development principles and developmentally appropriate practices: (2) actively involve parents as partners in their child's development; (3)actively involve and are responsive to the needs and resources of the community; and (4) are committed to educating preschoolers in the community, either on-site or in collaborative relationships.

Six sites were selected for further study. Plans are now being prepared for providing technical

assistance for schools at the planning and implementation stages of developing early childhood centers.

OERI FUNDING: Integration of Education and Human Services

This project brings together the knowledge bases of relevant fields of research with assessment of community-based models for school-community partnerships in support of comprehensive services to students at risk. Increasingly recognized by educators and human service providers is the value and effectiveness of working collaboratively to provide comprehensive services to children and families in their communities.

NWREL has identified and interviewed staff of more than 20 model activities in the region, and four sites were selected for further analysis of strengths and capabilities. As a result of this activity, NWREL hopes to be able to assist schools in reducing barriers and leading development of collaborative activities.

OTHER FUNDING: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) Longitudinal Study

ECEAP, a whole-child, comprehensive, family-focused preschool program designed to help low-income children succeed in Washington state's public school system, has four components: developmentally appropriate cognitive and social education, parent involvement, health services, and social services.

NWREL is currently in its fourth year of tracking the success of at-risk children and their families as they move from ECEAP into /the public schools. Nearly 1,400 ECEAP children are being traced from the beginning of preschool through completion of fourth grade, comparing their academic and social success with a matched sample of nearly 300 children who were ECEAP-eligible, but unserved. Results of the third year of the study showed strong positive outcomes for Washington's children and families.

OTHER FUNDING: Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) Area Agency Pilot Project

In order to explore strategies for implementing ECEAP principles, ECEAP initiated this project, working with a small group of volunteer program directors who made three commitments: (1) to increase their responsibility for service coordination across an "Area," often, but not necessarily, a county (an "Area" might be a social as well as a political designation); (2) to serve a coordinating "agency" function, bringing local stakeholders together; and (3) to work directly with local providers and community members to identify and implement program approaches appropriate to needs and aspirations of the community's families.

ECEAP contracted with NWREL to facilitate and document meetings and conduct site visits for documentation of field activities of six participant ECEAP contractors. Community-level change and integration efforts of the six contractors were documented and are currently being used to affect statewide improvements in service delivery to young children and their families.

OTHER FUNDING: Head Start Public School Early Childhood Transition Demonstration Project

This transition project is a collaborative effort among the Albina Ministerial Alliance (AMA) Head Start Program, Portland Public Schools (PPS), and NWREL. The project is designed to demonstrate and evaluate an innovative model for providing a comprehensive and integrated program of education and support services to children and families beginning in Head Start and continuing through grade 3 in the public schools.

The goals of the project are to: (1) increase student success in school; (2) assist parents in acquiring the skills, services, and opportunities necessary to support their children's healthy development and educational growth; and (3) increase collaboration and continuity of service among local Head Start programs, public elementary schools, parents, and various community service agencies. NWREL is conducting an independent project evaluation.

Laboratory: Pacific Region Educational Laboratory (PREL)

Address: 1164 Bishop Street, Suite 1409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
808-532-1900 FAX: 808-532-1922
Executive Director: John Kofel
Early Childhood Specialist: Alice Kawakami
Jurisdictions Served: American Samoa, Hawaii, Republic of the Marshall Islands,Federated-States-of-Micronesia (Kosrae-Pohnpei, Chuuk, Yap), Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Guam, Republic of Palau.

Description of Early Childhood Program

Early childhood educators from the Pacific region would have liked to attend the National Symposium, but because of the location and the lack of funding for travel, none were able to attend. Chief state school officers of the Pacific jurisdictions had been invited to participate or send representatives to the national symposium; however, there were no participants from our region.

Contacts with designated early childhood coordinators for each jurisdiction have been made. In the absence of funding, the group was not able to meet to discuss issues relating to the region. A networking session for interested early childhood educators was held at the PREL annual conference in Majuro in the Marshall Islands in July, 1991. Participants from six jurisdictions identified needs relevant to the region. The limited availability of comprehensive and long term support for early childhood education was identified as a major issue throughout the region. Culturally and developmentally appropriate curriculum development, parental and community involvement, teacher training, and capacity building were also identified as primary needs.

Work is continuing with on-site follow-up meetings, newsletters, and an annual networking session at the PREL conference. The 1992 PREL conference will be held in August in American Samoa.

In addition to these activities, a study on home and school learning styles is being conducted as part of the lab's research task. Issues relating to the strength of local home cultures and the need for a smooth transition to school culture are of major concern in the region. Implications for early childhood and early elementary curriculum are among the desired outcomes from the study.

Laboratory: Research for Better Schools, Inc. (RBS)

[Mid-Atlantic Laboratory]
Address: 444 North Third Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123-4107
215-574-9300 FAX: 215-574-0133
Executive Director: John Hopkins
Early Childhood Specialist: Janet Cornwell
States Served: Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and District of Columbia

Description of Early Childhood Program

The Transitions in Early Learning project provides an opportunity for RBS to join forces with other regional education laboratories and the U.S. Departments of Education, and Health and Human Services, in a common effort to address regional and national early childhood transition issues. An important demonstration of this collaboration was the planning and convening of the first annual national policy forum, which was attended by over 20 representatives from the Mid-Atlantic region.

The national policy forum serves as a springboard for regional transition activity through RBS' sponsorship of symposia. Philadelphia was the location for the first annual regional symposium, held on October 24 - 25. Called Transitions in Early Learning: Building a Regional Agenda for Action, this invitational symposium included 100 policymakers (state early childhood coordinators, governors' advisors, child advocates, social and health service agency administrators), practitioners (public school and Head Start staff, parents, board members) and researchers. All share a concern about the early learning years, and especially about seeing that young children receive the kind of comprehensive and developmentally appropriate learning experiences that will assure their success.

The two-day program featured such speakers as: Nicholas Zill (Child Trends, In.) on the status of the national readiness goal, John Love (RMC Research Corporation) on findings from a large-scale transition study; Vivian Gadsden (National Center on Adult Literacy) on family literacy and multicultural diversity; and Jule Sugarman (Center on Effective Services for Children) on interagency collaboration. There were panel presentations on various regional transition efforts, and small group conversations on key transition issues. In addition, participants met in state groups designed to stimulate collaborative efforts.

A publication describing the content and highlights of the symposium is available from RBS. The second symposium is scheduled for October 29 - 30, 1992, to be held in Philadelphia.

Another major aspect of Transition in Early Learning project is the provision of strategic assistance to two sites within the region, designed to result in the development of validated and replicable transition models. The two sites have been selected because they illustrate promising transition efforts. Both sites are committed to refining their work so that their transition models can be used by others.

During the next two years, RBS will be working with staff, parents, and community members in these sites by providing both program implementation and program evaluation assistance. By Fall of 1993, each site will have key transition components in place, and will have evidence that their transition model can achieve its intended

effects. RBS will document their progress, and describe how each transition model functions.

Other RBS early childhood activities include the development of a paper on the topic of ungraded primary grade units, the support of the Pennsylvania Department of Education's design of a developmentally appropriate assessment for Chapter 1 students (ages three to eight), and evaluation of an on-going Even Start program in Reading, PA.

Laboratory: SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE)

Address: 345 South Magnolia Drive, Suite D-23
Tallahassee, Florida 32301-2950
800-352-6001 or 904-922-2300 FAX: 904-922-2286
Executive Director: Roy Forbes
Early Childhood Specialist: Nancy Livesay
States Served: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina

Description of Early Childhood Program

NATIONAL FORUM

SERVEing Young Children staff participated in the planning and selection of presenters for the national forum. About 15 persons attended the southeast regional sessions held at the national symposium.

REGIONAL FORUM

On November 21 and 22, 1991, sixty-three stakeholders from the six southeastern states came together in Atlanta, Georgia to address Goal 1 and to discuss strengthening linkages and the transition between pre-k programs and early elementary school. As an outgrowth of the direction from the participants at the national symposium, the keynote speaker was selected from the corporate world. Participants included Head Start and day care personnel, elementary teachers (regular and exceptional education) and principals, state and federal Department of Education employees, university faculty, business representatives and parents. The theme was "Improving Linkages--The Challenge for the Southeast". Sponsors and collaborators in planning included the six state departments of education and SACUS (Southern Association on Children Under Six). The results of the national forum guided the efforts of this symposium as state teams worked to develop state plans for improving collaboration. Activities and experiences included keynote addresses, small group sessions, concurrent sessions, state meetings and showcases of exemplary transition programs. Proceedings from the symposium were disseminated by January 31, 1992 to approximately 400 agencies or stakeholders. Next year's forum will be held within 60 days following the national forum.

HHS FUNDED FIELD ACTIVITY

The SERVEing Young Children Sharing Success Program was launched at the symposium in November. The deadline for submission of applications was February 14, 1992; 34 applications were reviewed by a nine-member team from the southeast plus SERVE staff. Following the training and site selection process, the review teams conducted 19 site visits to identify those programs that will receive assistance for enhancing efforts in transitions, and technology transfer services in order to develop, evaluate and disseminate information about effective transition programs. Successful transition programs will be showcased at next year's symposium, and will be recognized in a Sharing Success publication and video to be produced in Program Year 3 (1992-3).

HHS-FUNDED OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Development of a Hot Topics publication targeting families of young children through reaching out to their employers.
- Facilitating Family Involvement in Early Childhood Education for a Better Bottom Line: A Guide for Business is due to be published in April 1992.

- Collaboration with state early childhood organizations to co-sponsor state meetings as an outgrowth of the regional and national forums.

- Presentations on improving transitions and linkages at conferences and meetings in the region.

- Development of research briefs on transition issues.

OTHER LAB ACTIVITIES RELATED TO EARLY CHILDHOOD (non-HHS funding)

- Hot Topics publications related to early childhood.

— Comprehensive School Improvement.
— Collaborating for Improved Services to Children, Families and Communities.
— Appreciating Differences: Teaching and Learning in a Culturally Diverse Classroom
— Schools for the 21st Century: New Roles for Teachers and Principals

The lab's Sharing Success Program includes recognition of exemplary programs in math/science for Program Year 1 (1990-1) and safe/drug free schools for Program Year 2 (1991-2). These include programs in early elementary school.

At least one of the R&D projects has a family involvement component which impacts early childhood efforts.

Laboratory: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)

Address: 211 East Seventh Street
Austin, Texas 78701
512-476-6861 FAX: 512-476-2286
President and Chief Executive Officer: Preston C. Kronkosky
Early Childhood Specialist: Cindy Rojas Rodriguez or David L. Williams, Jr.
States Served: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas

Description of Early Childhood Program

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's (SEDL's) early childhood education project focuses on improving the transition of children from early childhood education programs to the early elementary school grades (e.g., kindergarten or first grade), especially for children at risk of ultimately failing in and /or dropping out of school. Thus far, four major activities have been undertaken as part of the project's scope of work.

First, SEDL staff took part in planning, organization, and convening a national policy symposium co-sponsored by the U. S. Departments of Education (ED) and Health and Human Services (HHS). SEDL made recommendations regarding the meeting's format, potential speakers, topics to be addressed, invitees from the SEDL region, and time frames for the symposium's events. During the meeting, SEDL staff served as facilitators for small group breakout sessions.

Second, SEDL organized and convened a regional meeting for selected persons from its five state service area entitled, "Southwestern Regional Forum on Strengthening Linkages and Transitions Between Early Childhood Education Programs and Early Elementary Schools for At-Risk Children and Their Families." The meeting was held to provide early childhood program and elementary school practitioners, researchers, teacher trainers, and decision makers with practical knowledge and information to enhance awareness and improve implementation of transition programs for children from early childhood programs to the early elementary school grades. It was held in Dallas, Texas on October 22, 1991.

Through a keynote address, panel presentations and discussions, and state-level breakout meetings, the Forum provided insights about several key transition program topic areas. Included among these topics were: (1) collaborations to reduce transition barriers; (2) developmentally appropriate practices for transition programs; (3) the role of language and culture in transition activities; and (4) key state-specific actions needed to increase the number and effectiveness of transition programs. Among the featured presenters were Dr. Willie Epps (Head Start Program, Southern Illinois University), Dr. Cathy Grace (Executive Director of Southern Association on Children Under Six), Ms. Jean Klinge (U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education), Dr. Gloria Rodriguez (Executive Director of AVANCE), and Ms. Wanda Smith (Executive Director of Dallas County Family Services). Early in 1992, SEDL will produce and distribute a proceedings document highlighting events from the Regional Forum. SEDL also plans to convene Regional Forums in the fall of 1992 and 1993. Each of these will be organized to build from the anticipated ED/HHS National Policy Symposia to be held in each of these years.

Third, the project has begun to identify exemplary programs that are achieving successful transitions in the SEDL region. Staff are producing briefing sheets that describe

these programs for distribution. A fourth part of the successful program identification process involves selecting one or more of these exemplary transition programs to serve as a "veteran" site and help facilitate the transfer of its success to "adopter" sites--i.e., those interested in developing or enhancing their transition effort. SEDL and the "veteran" site will assist by providing technical assistance, resource information and evaluation services. SEDL will refine the transition program "veteran/adopter" approach and make it available for use by prospective sites in the region or nation.

Other related early childhood project activities at SEDL include (1) the Follow Through Program, which provides educational (oral language development) and other comprehensive support services for mostly poor, language minority students, grades K-3, in 10 sites across the nation; (2) the Title VII Multifunctional Resource Center, which provides training and technical assistance to school staff and parents involved with Title VII, bilingual, and ESL (English as second language) education/special assistance programs for young students in Texas; and (3) the Paso Partners (three Texas school districts, an institution of higher education, and SEDL), which is designed to improve mathematics and science achievement among limited English proficient Hispanic students in grades K-3.

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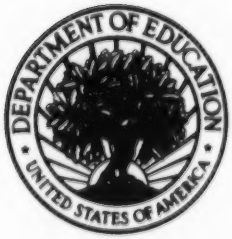

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